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Sustainablity and The White House

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With the election approaching in November, one issue that is often overlooked is the environmental stances of candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Students and faculty of Winthrop discussed the different positions of these two parties, Savannah Moritzky, co-president of Winthrop's Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) said, "The environmental issues we are and will be facing are problems that involve the whole world, not just the United States."

According to Clara Kress, also co-president of SEAC, sustainability issues are global and disproportionately affect lower-income individuals first. "Pacific islanders are already losing land where they live due to rising sea levels and many impoverished people that live in unsafe places due to air or water quality do not have the money to move. It's a human rights issue," Kress said.

In a tweet from 2012, Trump claimed that the Chinese created the concept of global warming, though he later denied this in the first presidential debate. He has referred to global warming as a hoax in other tweets.

Trump rejected global warming in his book "Crippled America," stating that the belief that carbon emissions cause climate change is driving the push for renewable energy. "If you don't buy that--and I don't--then what we have is really just an expensive way of making the tree-huggers feel good about themselves," Trump stated.

According to Christopher Van Aller, professor of political science at Winthrop, the vast majority of scientists would not support Trump's view regarding climate change.

In a joint publication in 2014, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of the United Kingdom stated: "Human activities — especially the burning of fossil fuels since the start of the Industrial Revolution — have increased atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations by about 40 percent." It also stated that the global average surface temperature has increased by about 1.4 F since 1900 along with climate effects including warming of the ocean, rise in sea level and a decline in Arctic sea ice.

In her acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, Hillary Clinton said, "I believe in science. I believe that climate change is real and that we can save our planet while creating millions of good-paying clean energy jobs."

Clinton's agenda includes providing resources to prepare for climate change. "It is irresponsible for the government to not provide leadership in preparing for the disruptions that will occur due to climate change," Marsha Bollinger, formerly the Dalton endowed chair of Environmental Sciences and Studies said.

Christopher Johnson, Winthrop's sustainability coordinator, believes that the United States should be looking for better ways to use energy sources and reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. "Why not utilize solar for residential and certain industrial productions? Why do we need to use electricity to cool our homes when geothermal is a long term solution that can do the same thing? Why can't we focus on heating hot water with the sun?" Johnson asked.

In his America First Energy Plan, Trump revealed his aim to revoke policies that enforce restrictions on new drilling technologies, stating that they create millions of jobs.

"There is a glut of oil due to shale oil and gas, so drilling does not make much economic sense right now," Van Aller said. "We also may wish to think about whether we want drilling in pristine areas, such as off the South Carolina coast. One heavy spill would spell the doom of tourism for a number of years, and the ecosystem might never fully recover."

According to Bollinger, Clinton understands that sustainability links economic, environmental and social justice issues, while Trump approaches issues primarily from an economic perspective.

"Clinton talks about reforming the oil leasing process and revitalizing coal communities while moving away from fossil fuels. She provides alternatives to the fuels and replacements for the fossil fuel driven industries. Trump wants to open up more offshore oil leasing, encourage more extraction of gas from shale and encourage more coal production," Bollinger said.

While sustainability may not be your ultimate concern this election, it is important to remember that these issues are multifaceted and long-term. As Van Aller said, "We only have one world and we should emulate the Native Americans who stated that we must live for the seventh generation."

2016 Scientific Debate

TOPIC	CLINTON	TRUMP	JOHNSON	STEIN
CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY	Plans to generate half of our electricity from clean sources with half a billion solar panels installed by the end of her first term	"There is still much that needs to be investigated in the field of 'climate change.'"	"The very activities that appear to contribute to climate change also contribute to mankind's health and prosperity."	"Our Green New Deal plan prioritizes a rapid transition to 100% clean renewable energy"
MENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH	"Within my time in office as president, Americans will no longer separate mental health from physical health when it comes to access to care or quality of treatment."	"Our efforts to support research and public health initiatives will have to be balanced with other demands for scarce resources."	"The drug war prevents treatment - and decriminalization and legalization can remove enormous barriers to mental health treatment."	"A Medicare For All single payer healthcare system would place health as the bottom line rather than industry profits."
NUCLEAR POWER	Plans to ensure the climate benefits from existing and safe nuclear power plants, to increase research in nuclear power and to reduce weapons-grade material worldwide.	"We can make nuclear power safer, and its outputs are extraordinary given the investment we should make."	Plans to maintain strict nuclear safety standards and investigate newer and safer lower yield reactors like breeder reactors or thorium reactors.	"Nuclear fission technology is unsafe, expensive, and dirty from the mining of uranium to the disposal of spent fuel."
OPIOIDS	Proposed a $10 billion initiative to combat America's "epidemic of drug and alcohol addiction."	Plans to stop the inflow of opioids into the US and says this is a national problem that costs America.	States that opioids are over-prescribed because patients don't have access to safer pain management alternatives like cannabis.	Plans to redirect funds for the "war on drugs" toward expanded research.

TECH TIP OF THE WEEK

You can use the following websites to help you track the election: 270towin, Rock the Vote, Real Clear Politics, New York Times Interactive Tracker and Ballotpedia.

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